

Friday, August 5, 2022

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: **2022-23 Health and Safety Measures in Schools**

For the past two school years, Ontario's students, and their families, educators and school staff have demonstrated resiliency and flexibility in responding to changes to public health and workplace safety measures during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Education remains committed to providing students with a normal return to school and to supporting an enriching school experience that enables academic success and lets students take advantage of the activities and programs that enhance classroom learning and build social and life skills.

As recently announced, the Government of Ontario's ***Plan to Catch Up***, will help students catch up on learning, prepare for the jobs of the future and support their physical and mental health and well-being.

The Plan is available to view or download [here](#), and includes five key pillars:

- Kids being **back in the classroom**, on time with a full school experience that includes extra-curriculars like sports, band and field trips;
- **Tutoring supports** to fill gaps in learning;
- Preparing them for the **jobs of tomorrow**, including the skilled trades;
- More money to **build new schools** and improve education; and
- Expanded supports for **students' mental health**.

On the advice of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, for the 2022-23 school year, most health and safety requirements remain unchanged from the previous direction provided to school board partners at the end of the 2021-22 school year.

Continuing with this direction and based on the advice of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, masks will not be required for students, staff and visitors in schools, school board offices, or on student transportation. We strongly encourage school boards and schools to actively promote respectful, welcoming and inclusive

environments for individuals who choose to wear, or not to wear a mask within their school communities.

The government will continue to provide free high-quality masks for students and staff and eye protection for staff, if they choose to use them. School boards can continue to order this optional PPE for students and staff through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery (formerly the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services).

Where staff are required to perform an Aerosol Generating Medical Procedure (AGMP) or required to be in the same room when an AGMP is being performed, N95 respirators (fit tested) are recommended and will continue to be provided. All staff will also continue to have access to non-fit-tested N95s.

School boards will also continue to have access to rapid antigen tests to be used in accordance with provincial testing guidance.

For students with disabilities, all health and safety protections continue to be fully adhered to with additional supports in staffing and mental health funding to support students most in need.

All students will continue to have access to evidence-based and timely school-based mental health services and supports. The government has made unprecedented investments to support student mental health, including over \$90 million projected in 2022-23, an increase of \$10 million from the previous year.

It is recommended that staff, students and visitors continue to self-screen every day before attending school using either the [COVID-19 school and child care screening tool](#), or a screening tool designated by the local public health unit, in alignment with current provincial guidance. Following public health guidance, individuals should stay home if they are feeling ill to prevent the spread of illness.

Appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette should continue to be promoted and integrated throughout the school day. Hand sanitizer will continue to be provided to school boards through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and the government's pandemic supply chain.

The ministry is providing \$304 million through the COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund in the 2022-23 Grants for Student Needs for enhanced cleaning standards and temporary additional staffing requirements, including to maintain enhanced cleaning standards. The funding can be used to support teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants, and other education workers, including custodians to continue to support healthy and safe schools.

School boards have flexibility in how they use the funds among any of these priorities, based on local need.

Schools and school vehicles are expected to continue with enhanced cleaning protocols requiring cleaning/disinfecting high-touch surfaces at least once daily. Required critical supplies and equipment, for example, disinfectant, will continue to be provided to school boards through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and the government's pandemic supply chain.

Significant improvements have been made to ventilation and filtration through the implementation of various measures across all schools. This includes improvements to existing ventilation systems, deployment of over 100,000 standalone HEPA filter units and other ventilation devices, upgrades to school ventilation infrastructure and increased transparency for students, parents and staff.

School boards are expected to continue to implement ventilation best practice measures outlined in [2021:B14 School Ventilation as applicable in the context of each school facility](#).

Consistent with updated American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) guidance, ventilation systems should be operated two hours or more before the first occupant enters the building or after the last occupant leaves the building.

A reminder that HEPA units are required in every occupied kindergarten class, in all occupied learning spaces without mechanical ventilation, and in mechanically ventilated learning spaces without MERV-13 level filters. Any additional HEPA filter units should continue to be deployed by school boards in learning spaces in a manner that maximizes their benefit.

Please note Public Health Ontario has updated its Frequently Asked Questions document on [Use of Portable Air Cleaners and Transmission of COVID-19](#).

For the 2022-23 school year, school boards must also continue to publicly communicate ventilation measures through the Standardized Ventilation Measures Report. School boards should ensure this report can be easily found on their website. School board workbooks will be shared for school boards to validate and update as required. The data must be shared with the Ministry by August 22, 2022, and reports must be updated and posted publicly by August 26, 2022.

Schools/school boards are to continue to monitor their own absence rates and collaborate closely with their local public health unit, including School-Focused Nurses, to support student well-being and health and safety in schools. Should the absence rate in a school increase above what a school would typically experience, and absences are not perceived to be linked to other factors (e.g., holidays), it is recommended that a school principal notify their local public health unit.

Increased absenteeism may indicate increased cases of COVID-19 or other respiratory or gastrointestinal infections in the school. Local public health units are encouraged to

have a process in place to review absence data and may provide schools/boards with additional guidance and support, including suggested resources for communication to students, staff and families.

For the 2022-23 school year, the ministry is working with the Office of the Fire Marshal on a return to pre-pandemic total evacuation fire drill procedures in schools. These procedures are specific to individual schools and are documented in fire safety plans that are approved by local Chief Fire Officials. Information from the Office of the Fire Marshal about fire drill procedures in schools will be shared at a later date. Any updates to a school's Emergency and Crisis Response plan should be aligned with the most current public health guidance and should be fully communicated to members of the school community, the local police service and the local fire department.

As was the case for the last two school years, each board is to identify a COVID-19 contact person (COVID-19 Board Lead) and to provide their name and contact information to the Field Services Branch regional manager by September 9, 2022.

See list of Field Services Branch regional managers.

Central	Maureen Shave	(705) 725-7634 1-800-471-2537	Maureen.Shave@ontario.ca
West	Jeff Moser	(519) 667-2044 1-877-421-7184	Jeff.Moser@ontario.ca
North	Stephen Simard	(705) 492-9936 1-800-461-9570	Stephen.Simard@ontario.ca
East	Marie-Christine Lemenchick	(613) 225-7182 1-800-267-1067	Marie-Christine.Lemenchick@ontario.ca
Toronto	Michelle Newlands	(416) 314-8679 (647) 289-7675	Michelle.Newlands@ontario.ca
Director	Andrew Locker	(647) 972-1542	Andrew.Locker@ontario.ca

The purpose of identifying COVID-19 Board Leads is to facilitate the ministry's ongoing and timely communications with school boards in order to support the implementation of any health and safety measures necessary to keep schools open for in-person learning.

A general reminder that staff, students, and visitors should ensure that they are complying with all applicable health and safety requirements for the sector or facility in which they are in (e.g. rules associated with an Education and Community Partnership Program facility).

Should you have any questions, please contact **Julia Danos, Executive Lead, Reopening Secretariat** at julia.danos@ontario.ca.

As always thank you for continued collaboration and partnership to support students and staff.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

c: Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)
Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
Chair, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
Co-ordinator, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)